

The Moroccan Sahara Conflict: The Four Decade Long Unresolved Conflict

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Final International University

July, 2023

Girne, KKTC

MA, 2023

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by

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A thesis submitted to the Institute of Graduate Studies in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

in

Political Science and International Relations

Final International University

July, 2023

Girne, KKTC



**FINAL INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**

APPROVAL

Title: The Moroccan Sahara conflict: The four decade long unresolved
conflict

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*To my family,
for their love and support.*

ETHICAL DECLARATION

I, Aymane El Laiti Ben Ayad, hereby, declare that I am the sole author of this thesis and it is my original work. I declare that I have followed ethical standards in collecting and analyzing the data and accurately reported the findings in this thesis. I have also properly credited and cited all the sources included in this work.

Aymane El Laiti Ben Ayad

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, I thank Allah for blessing me with the opportunity to enhance my knowledge and the chance to have a positive impact on the world. I would also like to thank my family for making this experience possible and for the unconditional support and encouragement they have shown me throughout my academic journey. I would also like to use this opportunity to thank my supervisor Asst. Prof. Deniz Dinc for the guidance and knowledge he has offered me throughout the course of my Masters. And finally, I would like to thank all the friends and classmates that have shared this journey with me, and helped me improve my research with their insights and constructive criticism.

ABSTRACT

The Moroccan Sahara Conflict is a long-standing territorial dispute between Morocco and the Algerian backed POLISARIO Front, a Sahrawi separatist movement. The conflict began in 1975 when Spain withdrew from the Moroccan Sahara, leaving it to be claimed by both Morocco and Mauritania. The POLISARIO Front then launched a guerilla war against them and proclaimed the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) in 1976. Despite several attempts at permanent peace negotiations, the conflict remains unresolved with Morocco controlling most of its Sahara and has growing international recognition of its sovereignty over the territory by countries such as the United States, while the "SADR" is recognized by a few countries as an independent state. This study analyses the United Nations involvement in the Moroccan Sahara conflict. It evaluates the attitude that the UN has shown and its role in the resolution of this conflict, it presents the relevant information, and the UN's approaches. It also analyses the challenges and obstacles standing in the way of a reasonable lasting peace deal. Through a qualitative research design conducted via a desktop study, this research has found that the UN has been suffering from a series of demoralizing failures in its attempts to settle this conflict, which can be seen in the reality through the resulted stalemate, and the breakdown of the cease-fire afterwards. These findings indicate that a change of tactics and approaches by the UN is ought to happen if they were to ever achieve lasting peace in this region.

Keywords: Moroccan Sahara, United Nations, POLISARIO Front, MINURSO, Nationalism

ÖZ

Fas Sahra Çatışması, Fas ile Sahra'vi ayrılıkçı hareketi olan Cezayir destekli POLISARIO Cephesi arasında uzun süredir devam eden bir toprak anlaşmazlığıdır. Çatışma 1975 yılında İspanya'nın Fas Sahrası'ndan çekilmesi ve Sahra'nın hem Fas hem de Moritanya tarafından sahiplenilmesi ile başlamıştır. POLISARIO Cephesi daha sonra bu ülkelere karşı bir gerilla savaşı başlattı ve 1976 yılında Sahra Arap Demokratik Cumhuriyeti'ni (SADR) ilan etti. Kalıcı barış görüşmeleri için birkaç girişimde bulunulmasına rağmen, çatışma Fas'ın Sahra'nın çoğunu kontrol etmesi ve ABD gibi ülkeler tarafından bölge üzerindeki egemenliğinin uluslararası alanda giderek daha fazla tanınması, "SADR "nin ise birkaç ülke tarafından bağımsız bir devlet olarak tanınmasıyla çözümsüz kalmaya devam etmektedir. Bu çalışma, Birleşmiş Milletler'in Fas Sahrası ihtilafına müdahil olmasını analiz etmektedir. BM'nin sergilediği tutumu ve bu çatışmanın çözümündeki rolünü değerlendirmekte, ilgili bilgileri ve BM'nin yaklaşımlarını sunmaktadır. Ayrıca makul ve kalıcı bir barış anlaşmasının önündeki zorlukları ve engelleri analiz etmektedir. Masa başı çalışmasıyla yürütülen nitel bir araştırma tasarımı aracılığıyla bu araştırma, BM'nin bu çatışmayı çözmeye girişimlerinde bir dizi moral bozucu başarısızlıktan muzdarip olduğunu, bunun da sonuçta ortaya çıkan çıkmaz ve ardından ateşkesin bozulmasıyla gerçekte görülebileceğini ortaya koymuştur. Bu bulgular, BM'nin bu bölgede kalıcı bir barışa ulaşabilmesi için taktik ve yaklaşımlarında değişikliğe gitmesi gerektiğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Fas Sahrası, Birleşmiş Milletler, POLISARIO Cephesi, MINURSO, Milliyetçilik

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

%	Percentage
AMU	Arab Maghreb Union
Km ²	Square Kilometers
MINURSO	United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara
MLA	Moroccan Liberation Army
OAU	Organization of African Unity
PLO	Palestine Liberation Organization
POLISARIO	Popular Front for the Liberation of Saguia el-Hamra and Río de Oro
SADR	Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic
UN	United Nations

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The United Nations has been historically invested in advocating peace and amicability between nations as well as within them. But only after 3 years of its establishment did it officially launch its first peacekeeping mission where the Security Council deployed a number of United Nations military observants to monitor the ceasefire between Israel and the Arab countries in May 1948. This mission marked the starting point of the United Nations' conflict resolution journey, which now has taken part in over 70 conflicts, around the world among which 12 are ongoing. Countries like Angola, El Salvador, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Cambodia, and Morocco have all been subject to a United Nations peacekeeping mission (UN Peacekeeping: 70 Years of Service & Sacrifice, n.d.). However, there have been numerous criticisms of the United Nations' handling of these conflicts, as well as some claims of inefficiency concerning its conflict resolution methods. While some justify this by claiming that these issues are due to the differences in culture, religion, history, and other important factors between the various regions of conflict around the globe, others argue that the United Nations' shortcomings are mainly caused by a lack of innovation in their conflict resolution approaches, and claim that the United Nations needs to get unstuck from its traditional methods and come up with new, modern approaches for it to be able to succeed in resolving modern conflicts (Zoubir & Pazzanita, 1995). One of the ongoing peacekeeping missions is the Moroccan Sahara conflict, which will be the focus of this research.

1.1. Background and Context

The Moroccan Sahara conflict (also referred to as "Western Sahara Conflict") proved to be one of the longest standing conflicts in United Nations history, exceeding 4 decades of ongoing conflict. This research aims to review the various approaches the United Nations has used in its attempts to peacefully resolve this conflict, uncover the challenges it stumbled upon throughout its peacekeeping mission in the region, detect

the United Nations' shortcomings in this particular conflict, and evaluate how they reflected on the situation. This chapter will lay a foundation for this study by first outlaying the background of the conflict, then presenting the research problem and aims, followed by the objectives of the study and the questions that it will tackle, then it will demonstrate the importance of this research, and finally cite the limitations of this study.

Since the conflict about the Moroccan Sahara territory started, it has been a major challenge to the United Nations organization. As an entity that has the main purpose of maintaining international peace, the United Nations has been actively trying to peacefully solve the 48 years long conflict for over 30 years through the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) (UN, 2020), but even after spending all this time the United Nations failed to reach a consensus between the parties. What made an even bigger blow to the reputation of the United Nations was the recent announcement of the return of the conflict to a status of an armed conflict in 2020. Negating the cease-fire agreement signed with the United Nations as a mediator in 1991.

1.1.1 Moroccan Sahara Territory

The Moroccan Sahara is a territory in the north western part of the African continent. Bordering Mauritania in the south and east and sharing a small borderline with Algeria in the east. To the west, it holds a coastline of over 1100 km to the Atlantic Ocean. In addition to being one of the richest regions in the world in terms of fishing resources, the Moroccan Sahara holds a massive amount of phosphates making Morocco the country with the largest reserves of phosphates in the world, holding 75% of the world's reserves of phosphate rocks. Another significance of the Moroccan Sahara region is its large land surface, the Moroccan Sahara has a land surface of over 266,000 km² mainly made of desert, while the land surface of the United Kingdom is just over 243,000 km². This large land gets over 3600 hours of sunlight per year, which gives it the potential to be able to supply renewable energy that can satisfy the need of the whole Maghreb region. On top of that, the Moroccan Sahara's water resources on the Atlantic Ocean are believed to be home to considerable oil and gas reserves which are currently off-limits for exploration due to the active conflict and are yet to be

discovered (Bouziane & El-Katiri, 2018). This implies that the phosphates reserve in the Moroccan Sahara may only be the tip of the iceberg in the natural wealth of the region.

1.1.2 Background of The Conflict

The Moroccan Sahara is a strategic territory in North Africa situated in the southern part of Morocco. It has approximately 266,000 km² of land and a coastal line of over 1100 km on the Atlantic Ocean. After the European colonization of Africa, Spain, which made a late entry to the colonial race, took control of the Moroccan Sahara region in 1884. Local tribes rejected Spain's claim to the land, and chose to fight this colonial authority for control of the region that was later proclaimed as a Spanish province named "The Spanish Sahara", and border agreements were signed between Spain and France between 1900 and 1902 following the Berlin Conference. During Spain's long annexation of the Moroccan Sahara, Morocco, after gaining independence in 1956 put a claim on the territory in 1957 (Hodges & Zoubir, 2013). Spain kept hold of the Moroccan Sahara coastal region even after Morocco gained independence for its northern portion in 1956. The Moroccan Liberation Army (MLA) and two significant Saharan tribes, namely the Tekna tribe and the Reguibat tribe, began their campaigns against Spanish colonization in June and July 1956, to bring the territory back under Moroccan control. The MLA began its attacks on French posts in February 1957. Eventually, the MLA was decisively defeated during a formidable joint French-Spanish military operation known as Ouragan, which took place in February 1958 (Military et al., 2017). To decolonize the Moroccan Sahara, Morocco successfully pushed the UN in 1963 to officially proclaim it a non-self-governing region. Once Spain ultimately agreed to leave the Moroccan Sahara, the Madrid Accords were signed on the 14th of November 1975, with Spain, Mauritania, and Morocco, marking the end of the colonial era in Morocco in 1976. The Madrid Accords resulted in an agreement in which Morocco takes administration of the two northern thirds of the territory and Mauritania would take the administration of the remaining third. In 1976, the POLISARIO Front backed by Algeria proclaimed the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). Aiming to found an autonomous state in the Moroccan Sahara, they waged a guerrilla war against Morocco and Mauritania. After suffering defeats, Mauritania retracted its claim on the territory and Morocco annexed the last third of

the territory that was administered by Mauritania. The guerrilla war between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front lasted until the cease-fire agreement that was mediated by the United Nations and the “Organization of African Unity” (OAU) in 1991(Hodges & Zoubir, 2013).

1.1.3 Parties Involved in the Conflict

Initially, in the early years when the Moroccan conflict erupted, three main parties were directly active in the conflict. Namely Morocco, Mauritania, and the POLISARIO Front. Initially, the POLISARIO Front, a resistance movement established on the 10th of May, 1973 by Mustapha Sayed El Ouali, with the initial mission to resolute to violent revolution and armed insurgency as the means through which the Saharawi population can regain its freedom and foil the manoeuvres of Spanish colonialism, later on totally altered its strategy and made an ambiguous declaration in pursuit of full autonomy for the Moroccan Sahara. The Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) was formally proclaimed as a government-in-exile based in Algeria by this declaration(Hodges & Zoubir, 2013). Since then, the Algerian government has backed the POLISARIO Front in its political, military, and diplomatic conflict with Morocco. At this point, all three parties claimed that the sovereignty of the Sahara. Morocco and Mauritania had already signed a partition of the territory that Spain previously controlled in the 1975 Madrid Accords; in which Morocco took over the administration of the two northern thirds of the territory, and Mauritania was given the administration of the remaining third. In 1976 the POLISARIO Front backed by Algeria proclaimed the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic with a government in exile based in Algeria and claimed that the whole of the Moroccan Sahara territory belonged to them as the “Sahrawi people”, and started a guerrilla war on both Morocco and Mauritania claiming that they fight to “liberate the remaining occupied territories”. Shortly afterward in 1979, Mauritania being the weakest ring of the conflict chain retracted its claim on the region leaving only Morocco and the POLISARIO Front as the only main direct parties of the conflict.

1.2 Problem Statement

Both the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity failed to have any real impact toward the resolution of this conflict. The OAU's referendum agendas got hampered by Morocco's withdrawal of its membership in a contest over the admission of the self-proclaimed SADR into the union (Zoubir & Pazzanita, 1995, p. 614–628). While according to (Chopra, 1994, p. 303–319), the United Nations was not able to develop systematic and complete diplomatic, military, and political approaches that combine legitimacy and effectiveness. Later on, Darbouche, and Zoubir (2008) affirmed that the United Nations' inability to enforce its provisions on the conflict is caused by the polarities deriving from the interactions within the conflict between international law and geopolitics (Darbouche & Zoubir, 2008, p. 91-105). The absence of cooperation and compromise from the parties of conflict impacted the conflict resolution process (Ariyati, 2020, p. 30-40). Also, one of the main points of the dispute is the referendum option which Morocco deems out of the table (Conti, 2008. p. 178–196). Given the constant failures to reach a resolution to this conflict which made the conflict become considered one of the forgotten conflicts in the world (Chelimo, 2012, p. 17), the ceasefire was bound to collapse one day which is exactly what happened in 2020. However, the international community could play a greater role in promoting the long-term stability of the North African region by pursuing innovative policies geared towards addressing the root causes of the Moroccan Sahara conflict (Solà-Martín, 2010. p. 117-140).

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study will aim to present information about the United Nations' involvement and role in this conflict and evaluate it. To do that, it will view the approaches that the UN used throughout the time in which it was active in the conflict, it will then dig out the challenges that faced the United Nations and how it came short of reaching an acceptable solution, and finally evaluate the current situation of the conflict, and the UN's performance.

1.4 Research Questions

This study will try to tackle questions like how did the United Nations approach this conflict before the official start of its peacekeeping mission there? What changed after the establishment of the United Nations Mission for the Organization of a Referendum in the Sahara (MINURSO)? How did the Sahrawi Nationalist identity form? What effect did it have on the Moroccan Sahara conflict resolution efforts? How did the regional and international communities reflect on the conflict? How did the United Nations deal with such obstacles? And how can it increase its chances of reaching a consensus?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The Moroccan Sahara conflict is one of the most neglected conflicts in the world. In addition to being a large contributor to instability in the North African region, its continuance carries consequences economically, in security, and in human livelihood. This study will contribute to the expansion of the existing research on the conflict by uncovering the weaknesses of the conflict resolution strategies used so far, and pointing out the main debate points on which extensive research needs to be done. Which in turn will facilitate the research process for future studies on the subject, and result in a higher chance of finding the missing piece to resolve the puzzle that kept the United Nations helpless in its 32 years endeavor to resolve this conflict. And if this can finally be achieved, then it may even serve as a strong template to use in resolving other conflicts of similar nature should the United Nations ever find itself facing in the future.

1.6 Limitations

There are several limitations to conduct this study. With biggest one being the severe lack of recent studies on the topic, resulting in the majority of the resources available being outdated, thus not helpful. Another limitation would be the broadness and vastness of the factors that need to be accounted for to have a full understanding of the conflict making it not possible for a dissertation of this length to cover.

1.7 Research Structure

The first chapter introduced the context and background of the study, presented its aims, and identified the questions it will answer. This research's importance was discussed, and its limitations were stated. In the second chapter, a literature review will be conducted on the emergence of the Sahrawi nationalist identity, and its implications on the conflict. The third chapter will discuss and evaluate the international dimensions of the conflict and the UN involvement and performance in it, and present some important developments. And finally, the fourth chapter will discuss the results of the findings, and give some recommendations to further develop the current studies and get closer to the settlement of this dispute.

1.8 Methodology

This research aimed to evaluate the United Nations' role and presence in the Moroccan Sahara. It did this by gathering and presenting information concerning the UN's efforts in the area and the approaches used by it throughout the time in which it was active in the conflict, it also reflected the challenges that faced the United Nations and prevented it from reaching an acceptable solution, and it then discussed the current situation of the conflict. A qualitative research design was used in this research focusing on secondary data through a desktop study.

A desktop study was used due to the limitations faced while conducting this research, which include but not limited to the physical location of the researcher, and the lack of means to gather any sort of primary data and reliable generalizable statistics. The data sources included publications and internet sources, and a date range criterion was not used while conducting this research because the aim was to gather as much reliable information as possible to form an accurate conclusion from the findings.

CHAPTER 2

THE EVOLUTION OF SAHRAWI NATIONAL IDENTITY

Scholars argue that self-determination is an issue that has been discussed since the American independence declaration in 1776. It made obvious that self-determination had an inner segment as well as an exterior one. The first proposition was labeled by Franck as the 'democratic entitlement', and he related the notion of entitlement to the legality of the state (Franck, 1992, p. 47). While he proposes a tighter fit amid democracy and self-determination, this dissertation will not focus on democracy as a notion. Through an examination of the idea of the legality of the rule, state sovereignty in international politics, and ethnic nationalism, Whelan proposes three historical bases for self-determination (Whelan, 1994, p. 99–100). For the majority of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the literature has focused on the relationship between self-determination, autonomy, legality, and nationalism. Many political scientists and legal scholars researched them in pairs, always in connection to self-determination. James Mayall proposes a 'conventional insight' into the idea of self-determination in response to Whelan's historical approach. "The international society comprised of sovereign states that accepted each other's sovereignty and everything it implied, particularly their territorial integrity and right to govern their domestic affairs without outside interference" (Mayall, 1999, p. 475). Based on this interpretation, the right to self-determination only applied to colonized regions as a historical derivation from the notion of sovereignty as established since the Treaty of Westphalia. This traditional understanding is still important today, but it is not understood in terms of Cold War strategic imperatives or the mid-twentieth-century decolonization process (Mayall, 1999, p. 475–476). Nationalism has also influenced the contemporary self-determination debate. Umut Özkirimli's categorization of theories of nationalism provides a good framework for understanding the complexities of this political phenomenon. According to Özkirimli, there are mainly three approaches to nationalism, and they are as follows: Primordialism, modernism, and ethno-symbolism (Özkirimli, 2010, p. 49-167.). While primordialists contend that nationalism is embedded in pre-existing cultural or ethnic identities and passed down through generations, modernists consider it a product of modernity and the rise of the nation-

state. On the other hand, ethno-symbolists merge segments of both approaches by underlining the importance of symbols and folklore in shaping national identity (Ozkirimli, 2010, p. 49-167.).

The UN texts on self-determination are exceedingly conflicting and unclear. While it supports the freedom of individuals to select their own political future, it also indicates that national boundaries should be respected and that any state breakup is undesirable. As a result, despite UN Resolution 1541 outlining three alternatives for self-determination, only the first option of secession is often ruled out in the interests of international order. If a people is ruled by an alien regime and has the right to self-government, it may be essential to rebel against the ruling system (UN Security Council, 1960).

Allowing inhabitants to autonomously choose their political destiny risks destroying the global structure of sovereign nations and leaving weak people susceptible to the sway of big power politics and anarchist impulses. This anxiety seems to be at the center of the self-determination literature's discussion, particularly in regard to the clash between geographic integrity and self-determination. For example, Rosalyn Higgins contends that the self-determination right should always take a back seat to the right of national sovereignty. She contends that this is a basic aspect of the existing global juridical structure (Higgins, 1983, p. 387–394). Brilmayer (1991) and Tomuschat (1993), on the other hand, advocate for a restricted right that enables independence as a kind of self-determination in certain situations. While prudent, this issue has conceptual precedents in contemporary political theory. It is a redefinition of the ancient dispute between Rousseau's separatist theory and Hobbesian classical self-determination paradigm. Distinct concepts of country and state are at the center of this discussion.

Morocco's policy on the dispute over its Sahara includes aspects of the classical template of self-determination, arguing that any arguments for self-determination and eventual resolution to the Moroccan Sahara dispute must take place within the nation, its official organized guidelines, and institutions. It should come as no surprise that Morocco was originally open to a UN convention agreement under which the Sahrawi community would enjoy domestic autonomy under the Moroccan administration (Daadaoui, 2008, p.143-156). The claim of the POLISARIO front is unmistakably separatist. Coming from the assumption that a state as nation, it advocates in favor of

a thorough territorial split, with the foundation of a new unitary country in the Moroccan southern Sahara called The Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic that would embrace all Sahrawis, based on rigorous identity criteria (Daadaoui, 2008, p.143-156). While contemporary self-determination is explicit that the inhabitants of the Moroccan southern Sahara should be allowed a vote, it does not specify how such a group should be defined. The conceptual framework on the genesis of the self-determination principle left us with unanswered problems, such as who is eligible to vote in an UN- sponsored referendum on the future of the Moroccan Sahara. To be certain, as the Moroccan Sahara crisis demonstrates, United Nations remedies fail to identify the constraints upon which an identity resides, while explicitly articulating the right to self- determination as autonomy (Daadaoui, 2008, p.143-156).

2.1 Sahrawi Nationalism

The Sahrawi, or Saharawi, are the inhabitants of the Moroccan Sahara Desert, northern Mauritanian regions, and the far southwest of Algeria. The Sahrawi culture is heterogeneous, like that of the majority of people inhabiting the Sahara. It has traits typical of Sahelian ethnic groupings and Arab-Berber features, such as the elevated status of women. The Sahrawis are a diverse group of tribes that are a mix of Amazigh Berbers and Arabs, they mostly speak the Hassaniya dialect of Arabic. However, some still speak Berber in Morocco's disputed and undisputed areas. Ethnically, Moroccans, Mauritians, and Sahrawis are not different people; they all share Arab and Berber origins. The same applies culturally, as Morocco and Mauritania both have very rich and diverse cultures, and the Sahrawi culture is embedded in both of their national identities, however it is more apparent and plays a more essential part in the Moroccan culture. Translated from Arabic, "Inhabitant of the Desert" is the meaning of the word "Sahrawi." In scholarly circles, there has been much discussion and debate on the subject of Sahrawi nationalism. It alludes to the political, social, and cultural movement working to secure self-determination for the Moroccan Saharan Sahrawi people (Bouzidi, 2017). Researchers have delved deeply into this topic throughout the years, examining its historical roots, the function of leadership in fostering nationalism, and the effects of conflict on Sahrawi national identity. The first subtopic of this section is the "Historical Origins of Sahrawi Nationalism." It aims to provide

an overview of the factors that contributed to the emergence of Sahrawi nationalism. It will explore how colonialism and post-colonialism shaped Sahrawi identity and highlight key events that led to the formation of nationalist movements. The "Role of Leadership in Fostering Nationalism" will be the second subtopic. It will emphasize the crucial role that leaders played in fostering Sahrawi nationalism. It will evaluate their approaches to encouraging cultural heritage and creating a sense of community among Sahrawis. And finally, the third subtopic is the "Impact of Conflict on Sahrawi National Identity." This section will explore how conflict with Morocco has affected Sahrawis' sense of national identity. It will examine how displacement and human rights abuses have impacted their culture and traditions. The aim here is to provide readers with an in-depth understanding of Sahrawi nationalism in the Moroccan Sahara. By examining its historical origins, leadership strategies, and impact on national identity, we can gain insight into how this movement has evolved.

2.2 Historical Origins of Sahrawi Nationalism

The late 19th and early 20th centuries are when Sahrawi nationalism first emerged. Spain occupied the Moroccan Sahara during this time, depriving the native Sahrawi people of their independence. The Sahrawi people felt disenfranchised as a result of this loss of autonomy, which ultimately fueled nationalist fervor. The establishment of the POLISARIO Front had a significant development on Sahrawi nationalism (Bouzidi, 2017). In the Moroccan Sahara, the POLISARIO Front was founded as an insurgent group opposing Spanish colonial rule. The group later waged a guerilla war on both Mauritania and Morocco in an attempt to forge a separate identity for the Sahrawi people. Following Spain's withdrawal, Morocco annexed its Sahara. Reclaiming sovereignty of the territory despite protests from the POLISARIO Front. This led to years of conflict between Morocco and POLISARIO fighters, with sporadic fighting continuing until a ceasefire was signed in 1991. Since then, efforts have been made by both sides to reach a peaceful resolution to the conflict. Sahrawi nationalist spirit was significantly shaped by literature during this time of strife. Poems in particular have been used to express national identity. Many Sahrawi people who have been displaced by this conflict face exile, dislocation, and a love for their homeland, which are prominent topics in the poetry (Bouzidi, 2017). Overall, the historical roots

of Sahrawi nationalism can be traced to the indigenous population's loss of sovereignty during colonialism, which was followed by the battle defeat of the combined Sahrawi forces fighting for the Moroccan Army of Liberation (MLA) in 1958 against the Franco-Spanish counter-insurgency operation. Resistance organizations like the POLISARIO Front, which aimed to create an independent state for the Sahrawi people, were born out of this feeling of disenfranchisement (Bouzidi, 2017). Poetry in particular has been significant in articulating the Sahrawi people's feelings of relocation and longing for their country as well as helping to shape their nationalist sentiment.

2.3 Role of Leadership in Promoting Sahrawi Nationalism

In the case of the Moroccan Sahara, leadership is extremely important in fostering nationalism. The political and historical context of the Moroccan Sahara must be examined in order to comprehend the influence of leadership on Sahrawi nationalism (Zunes & Mundy, 2010). With the end of the Spanish colonial era in 1975, the Sahrawi people endured hardship. However, the Moroccan government's rule and later annexation of the Sahara prevented some Sahrawi separatists from achieving their goals of independence. In 1973, a resistance organization led by the separatist POLISARIO Front fought against Spanish forces. In an effort to assert its sovereignty over the region, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) was only established in 1976.

The leadership of the POLISARIO Front was instrumental in mobilizing the separation-oriented portion of the Sahrawi people towards their nationalistic goals. The charismatic figurehead of the movement, El-Ouali Mustapha Sayed, provided a unifying force for separatist Sahrawis both inside and outside the Moroccan Sahara. His leadership skills were evident in his ability to build alliances with other African liberation movements and gain recognition for SADR from several countries including Algeria, Cuba, and Libya (Zunes & Mundy, 2010).

Moreover, Mustapha Sayed's death during a military operation against Moroccan forces further solidified his status as a symbol of resistance among separatist Sahrawis. His death was mourned by thousands of his followers across the Moroccan Sahara and

served as an inspiration for them to continue his quest for independence (Hodges & Zoubir, 2013). Parallel to this, Mohamed Abdelaziz, who succeeded Mustapha Sayed as Secretary-General, made a significant contribution to maintaining the momentum in favor of nationalistic aspirations. Through his friendship with the Algerian leadership, Abdelaziz was able to continue to count on the backing of Algeria while also interacting with global institutions like the United Nations to draw attention to their predicament (Hodges & Zoubir, 2013).

Therefore, leadership played a critical role in promoting nationalism among the POLISARIO Front members. The examples of Mustapha Sayed and Mohamed Abdelaziz demonstrate how effective leadership can mobilize people toward goals set by the leaders however their nature may be.

2.4 Impact of Conflict on Sahrawi National Identity

The Sahrawi national identity has been significantly impacted by the the Moroccan Sahara War. Since 1975, the POLISARIO Front has been battling Morocco for control of the Sahara, and the prolonged battle has allowed them to impose their concept of national identity (Hodges & Zoubir, 2013). The literature written by Sahrawi separatist authors, which frequently focuses on themes of resistance, exile, and identity, is a good example of this.

With the emergence of a diaspora population, the conflict has had an impact on Sahrawi separatists' sense of national identity. Early in the fighting, a lot of Sahrawi separatists were compelled to leave their homes. Since the diaspora group shares a common experience of longing for their homeland, this exile has forged a strong sense of solidarity among them (Chatty & Cholchester, 2002).

The conflict has spawned a diaspora community in addition to putting more stress on traditional Sahrawi culture as a means of claiming national identity. This is especially true of Sahrawi separatist authors who frequently use traditional storytelling methods and imagery in their writing to convey their opposition to Morocco's annexation of its Sahara.

Undeniably, it is obvious that the struggle has had a profound and wide-ranging effect on Sahrawi national identity. While it has encouraged a greater emphasis on

traditional culture and comradeship among expatriate community members, it has also presented difficulties for individuals who are experiencing displacement. The continuous fight over the Moroccan Sahara's sovereignty and the intricate interactions between national identity, culture, and conflict are topics that pro-independence Sahrawi writers continue to investigate in their writing, and they provide insightful perspectives on both. Overall, this literature review highlights the complexity of Sahrawi nationalism and its evolution over time. It underscores the importance of understanding historical context and leadership dynamics in shaping nationalist movements. Moreover, it emphasizes how conflicts can have far-reaching consequences for national identities.

Every nation's existence depends on its sense of national identity. A nation is defined by its people's sense of common identity and values. Conflicts, however, can profoundly affect national identities. They can put a nation's very identity in jeopardy and force a re-evaluation of its fundamental principles (Chatty & Cholchester, 2002). The war between Israel and Palestine is one instance of this. The prolonged battle has widened the gap between the two countries, with each side considering itself fundamentally distinct from the other. Due to this, both Israelis and Palestinians have begun to doubt their ability to ever really cohabit with one another, and this has caused some Palestinians to completely reject the idea of an Israeli state (Chatty & Cholchester, 2002). Similar disputes involving caste and religion have threatened India's secular identity. Due to the emergence of Hindu nationalism, some Indians now feel that their country is more closely associated with their religion than with other religions. National identities have been profoundly affected by hostilities in both instances. People have been forced to face painful facts about their own prejudices and biases as a result of these movements, which have questioned long-held notions about what it means to be a citizen of a specific nation. Conflicts also can help forge or solidify emerging national identities. In Southern Sudan, for instance, the 2011 declaration of independence from Sudan brought about the establishment of a new country with a distinct character (Ariyati, 2020). Similarly, East Timor's 2002 split from Indonesia facilitated the emergence of a new national identity different from that of its previous years as part of Indonesia. Finally, national identities can be significantly impacted by conflicts. They can put to the test ingrained notions of what it means to be an individual nation's citizen and compel people to face up to unsettling truths about themselves.

However, they can also result in brand-new ways of forming an identity that is more encompassing and representative of the various groups inside a nation. So, to prevent further harm to their national identities, nations must understand the possible effects of conflicts and work toward a peaceful resolution.

CHAPTER 3

THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE SUB-SAHARAN CONFLICT

3.1 International Dimensions of The Conflict

A continuing territorial conflict in North Africa's Maghreb region is the Moroccan Sahara conflict. As Spain, the Moroccan Sahara's colonial authority, vacated the region, Morocco annexed it, sparking the start of the conflict. The POLISARIO Front, a national liberation movement representing the native Sahrawi people, opposed this annexation and fought to create an independent Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR). In response, Morocco and the POLISARIO Front engaged in a guerrilla war that lasted until 1991, when the United Nations arranged a truce between the parties. The problem has not been settled, despite numerous attempts at a peaceful resolution and several accords, up until this point (Chopra, 1994, p. 303-319).

Thousands of Sahrawi refugees who had been living for years in camps in Algeria have now been forced to relocate due to the conflict. The struggle has also significantly impacted the region's stability and growth, with tensions between Morocco and Algeria still high as a result of Algeria's support for the POLISARIO Front and recognition of the SADR as a sovereign state (Conti, 2008, p. 178-196). Given that the contested territory is abundant in natural resources like phosphate and fishing grounds, the conflict has also had an economic impact. There have been calls for their equitable sharing as part of any future peace agreement because Morocco has been accused of using these riches without the Sahrawi people's consent which contradicts with the Moroccan view that the territory is an integral part of the country. A diplomatic solution to the issue has been sought by the world organizations, such as the United Nations and others. Nonetheless, there's been no agreement among the parties regarding how to put an end to this conflict (Chopra, 1994). Several parties have become frustrated as a consequence of this lack of agreement, which has led the conflict to continue. Stronger international action has been called for to put pressure on both parties to enter into substantive discussions and come to a permanent agreement. It is evident that the Moroccan Sahara problem is still among the most difficult to resolve, and a solution would need political will on the side of all parties

concerned as well as a dedication to reaching a settlement that takes into account the interests and ambitions of all stakeholders (United Nations News, 2021). It would also need seamless focus and diplomatic efforts from the global community, in addition to a comprehensive strategy approaching the conflict's political as well as socioeconomic elements. Only then may the region advance towards tranquility, growth, and a lasting peace agreement. This section will focus on the entities partaking in the conflict while focusing on their motives, past actions, strategies, and goals regarding it.

3.1.1 Algeria

The Algerian government has been the biggest and most direct supporter of the POLISARIO Front, providing it with military, financial, and diplomatic support. This section seeks to critically examine Algerian support for the POLISARIO Front. This paragraph will focus on two key subtopics: The POLISARIO Front's influence on Algerian nationalism and the economic and political consequences of their support. The first subtopic explores how the POLISARIO Front's struggle for independence resonates with Algerian nationalism. Algeria fought a bitter war of independence against France from 1954 to 1962, which cemented its national identity as a proud anti-colonial state. Algeria sees itself as a champion of African liberation movements and supports self-determination for oppressed peoples around the world. Therefore, supporting the POLISARIO Front aligns with Algeria's historical narrative and national identity (Charrad & Zarrugh, 2014). The second subtopic examines the economic and political consequences of Algeria's support for the POLISARIO Front. The conflict over the Moroccan Sahara has been ongoing since Spain withdrew from its former colony in 1975, leading to regional instability in North Africa. Algeria's backing of the POLISARIO Front has strained relations with Morocco, which claims sovereignty over the Sahara. Additionally, supporting an armed insurgency places a significant financial burden on Algeria at a time when it faces economic challenges due to falling oil prices (Bensaidane-Bounabat & Khiati-Boudjemaâ, 2020). This dissertation contends overall that although Algerian support for the POLISARIO Front may be motivated by nationalist feelings, it also has substantial expenses that must be taken into account when determining its long-term viability. It is impossible to overstate the impact of the POLISARIO Front on Algerian nationalism. Algeria has

played a pivotal role in aiding the Sahrawi people's campaign for independence since the early 1970s, which has bolstered the nation's sense of identity and its sympathy for other oppressed peoples in Africa. The POLISARIO Front's political philosophy is founded on a Marxist foundation that is compatible with the Algerian revolutionary ideals that formed its political atmosphere since obtaining its independence from France (Charrad & Zarrugh, 2014). To help the POLISARIO Front to create an independent country, Algeria has always been crucial in giving both military assistance and diplomatic cover. Algeria's own independence struggle can be linked to its support for the POLISARIO Front. After eight years of struggle, during which it received assistance from neighboring African nations like Morocco, Egypt, and Ghana, the nation was emancipated from French colonial domination. This comradeship enabled Algerians to develop a sense of Pan-Africanism and form a close connection with other Africans who were resisting colonialism (Charrad & Zarrugh, 2014). Algeria supported the Sahrawi people as they started their independence struggle out of a similar sense of solidarity. Algerian involvement in the Moroccan Sahara dates back to 1975 when Morocco annexed the region after Spain withdrew. The Sahrawi people opposed this action and established the POLISARIO Front to claim the region. POLISARIO rebels who launched guerrilla attacks against Moroccan forces in the Sahara received military support, training, and protection from Algeria. Over time, Algeria's involvement with the POLISARIO Front evolved into more than just military aid; it became propaganda for Algerian solidarity with oppressed peoples across Africa. This was evident when Algeria hosted several liberation movements' conferences throughout Africa during the 1970s and 1980s, including those representing Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea Bissau among others. There is no doubt that the POLISARIO Front has had an enormous impact on Algerian nationalism over time by reinforcing its revolutionary principles while also promoting Pan-Africanism throughout Africa. Supporting this cause since its inception in 1973 through providing military aid along with diplomatic support and hosting various liberation movements' conferences throughout Africa during the 70s-80s shows how much energy is allocated by Algeria to mark itself the dominant power of the region. However, to fully accomplish this goal Algeria found it necessary to challenge its neighbor to the western border because Morocco holds too much influence over a number of African countries and is considered one of the most noteworthy countries in the continent (Zoubir & Rizkallah, 2020).

The POLISARIO Front's assistance by Algeria has had enormous economic and political repercussions. The POLISARIO Front has been given financial and military support by Algeria, which has allowed it to continue its armed conflict with Morocco. Since Algeria is also regarded as a major player in North Africa, as a result of this support, the POLISARIO Front has also gained some kind of credibility in international circles (Ould-Mey & Zoubir, 2016). Yet, Algeria has paid a price for its assistance. Their backing for the POLISARIO Front has strained the nation's ties with Morocco. Trade between the two nations has been severely constrained as a result of this friction, which has had a detrimental economic impact on both nations. As a result, both countries' economies grew slower and prices for products and services increased. Algeria's backing for the POLISARIO Front has had political repercussions in addition to these economic ones (Khiari-Senouci & Boudjemaï, 2018). One of the longest-running conflicts in Africa has been going on between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front since 1975 when Spain left the Moroccan Sahara. A peaceful conclusion to the problem has eluded negotiations several times. Algeria's backing of the POLISARIO Front can be interpreted as an effort on its part to sway regional politics. According to popular belief, Algeria sees Morocco as a possible adversary and considers itself to be the leader of North Africa. By aiding the POLISARIO Front, Algeria can tackle Morocco's annexation of its Sahara (Ould-Mey & Zoubir, 2016). Yet, this tactic has dangers. Algeria runs the risk of being perceived as a regional political instability by openly supporting an armed organization that aspires to independence from Morocco. This might cause other nations to consider it suspiciously or even hostilely. While Algeria's assistance to the POLISARIO Front may have benefited both sides in the short term, it also had substantial long-term economic and political repercussions. Despite decades of negotiations and intervention by numerous international parties, the ongoing conflict between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front has not yet been settled. If there is any chance of resolving this matter amicably and without further delay, it is obvious that finding a durable solution would require collaboration from all parties concerned, even those who have backed one side or the other.

In conclusion, Algerian support for the POLISARIO Front has been a significant issue with wide-ranging effects on the political and economic climate of the nation. Unquestionably, the POLISARIO Front has had a significant impact on Algerian nationalism, helping to define the nation's character and position on the Moroccan

Sahara. Yet, Algeria has also suffered serious economic and political repercussions as a result of its support. The strained ties between Algeria and Morocco and its subsequent expulsion from the Maghreb Union are clear indicators of the financial costs associated with backing the POLISARIO Front. Due to its reliance on commerce with its neighbors, Algeria's economy has suffered greatly as a result of this isolation. Furthermore, the country's support for POLISARIO Front has led to a significant drain on its resources, as it continues to provide financial and military aid to the group (Khiari-Senouci & Boudjemai, 2018). Politically, Algeria's support for POLISARIO Front has also been controversial. While it may have helped bolster nationalistic sentiments within the country, it has also resulted in strained relationships with other African nations. Additionally, this unwavering support for an armed separatist movement undermines Algeria's credibility as a mediator in regional conflicts. Overall, while the Algerian government may see supporting POLISARIO Front as an essential part of its foreign policy strategy, it must consider whether these actions are worth the significant economic and political costs they entail.

3.1.2 Libya

In the 1980s, Libya was a major contributor to the financial and military support given to the POLISARIO Front. The POLISARIO Front's support from Libya will be analyzed in this dissertation along with its causes, effects, and ramifications. Ideological reasons were a major factor in Libyan support for the POLISARIO Front. Muammar Gaddafi's Libya regarded itself as a revolutionary nation that aided liberation movements and anti-colonial movements all over the world. Gaddafi saw the POLISARIO Front as an authorized spokesman for the Sahrawi people's right to self-determination and held the POLISARIO Front responsible for the liberation of the Sahara from Moroccan rule (Boukhars, 2020). Nonetheless, Libya's assistance to the POLISARIO Front had several unfavorable effects. First, it exacerbated tensions between Algeria and Morocco, two countries that supported opposing sides in the Moroccan Sahara conflict, adding to the instability of the region. Second, it undercut diplomatic and negotiating efforts to bring about a peaceful end to the conflict. Thirdly, it caused both parties in this protracted conflict to violate human rights. Moreover, Libya's assistance to the POLISARIO Front had effects beyond North Africa. Libya's

ties with other Arab nations, such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, which were backing Morocco in this conflict, were strained. Because of its affiliation with radical forces like Hezbollah, it also contributed to Libya's isolation on the world stage. As a result, although Libya's support for the POLISARIO Front was possibly driven by ideological arguments against colonialism and in favor of self-determination, it had detrimental effects on stability in the region; it hindered diplomatic efforts to settle disputes peacefully; it resulted in violations of human rights on both sides; and it soured relations with other Arab states (Eljarh, 2019).

3.1.3 International Interventions in the Conflict

Morocco and the POLISARIO Front, which wants the region's independence, have been engaged in a protracted struggle over the Sahara region. Attempts to end this war have been hampered by the involvement of international entities. Others claim that it has simply contributed to making things worse, while some insist that international involvement is required to achieve a peaceful resolution.

On the one hand, advocates of international intervention in the Moroccan Sahara issue contend that a peaceful conclusion is required. They draw attention to the fact that despite years of bilateral talks between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front, the situation has not been resolved. Foreign actors can offer much-needed mediation and exert pressure on both parties to reach a settlement (Charrad & Elyazghi, 2020).

Supporters of international involvement also claim that it can contribute to the protection of human rights in the area. Since establishing its MINURSO peacekeeping mission in the Moroccan Sahara in 1991, the United Nations (UN) has been active in observing human rights violations there (United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara). Humanitarian help is additionally given by the UN to refugees residing in camps close to Tindouf, Algeria (Charrad & Elyazghi, 2020).

However, those who are against it claim that it has only contributed to heightening hostilities between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front. They note that other nations have chosen sides in this dispute, with some backing Morocco's claim to its Sahara and others advocating for the region's independence. International players now engage in a complicated web of alliances and conflicts as a result (Chelimo, 2012).

Furthermore, opponents contend that certain states have employed their weight on one party or the other as leverage to serve their agendas instead of working toward a peaceful settlement. For instance, France has historically backed Morocco's claims to its Sahara as a product of the two states' economic relations. Algeria, on the other hand, endorses independence in the Moroccan Sahara's given its previous affiliations with the POLISARIO Front (Chelimo, 2012).

However, those who are against foreign participation claim that MINURSO's mission has been too narrow and ineffectual. The mission was founded to stage a referendum on the Moroccan Sahara for self-determination or official integration with Morocco, but this has not yet taken place because of disputes about who should be permitted to cast a ballot. Additionally, monitoring violations of human rights in the Moroccan Sahara is not part of MINURSO's mandate (Conti, 2008).

To conclude, there are both advantages and disadvantages to the international players' intervention in the Moroccan Sahara dispute. Some claim that it only contributes to increasing tensions between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front, while others claim that it is essential for reaching a peaceful settlement and defending human rights. Any settlement to this dispute requires both sides to engage in unhindered, honest negotiations.

3.1.4 Moroccan Efforts to Gain Recognition for the Moroccan Sahara

Morocco's efforts to attain recognition for its sovereignty over the Moroccan Sahara have been diverse. Political lobbying, regional economic development initiatives, and diplomatic campaigns to strengthen its status among other nations have all been part of these efforts (Boukhars, 2018). One of the main strategies employed by Morocco has been diplomatic outreach. Morocco strived to build affiliations with African countries to attain backing for its claim in the Moroccan Sahara. In 2017, Morocco was re-admitted to the African Union after a 33-year absence after a campaign that concentrated on its dedication to settling the Moroccan Sahara conflict (Boukhars, 2018).

Another key strategy employed by Morocco has been economic development in its Sahara. The Moroccan government heavily invested in infrastructure like roadways

and piers to enhance living circumstances in the region and draw foreign investment. This approach intends to improve conditions on the ground and demonstrate that Morocco is committed to developing the Moroccan Sahara as an integral part of its territory (Chouliaraki & Guivera, 2018).

Despite these efforts, Morocco faces several challenges in its mission to gain recognition of its sovereignty over its Sahara. One major obstacle is opposition from Algeria, which supports the POLISARIO Front and provides it with financial and military assistance. Algeria views Moroccan control of its Sahara as a threat to its interests and therefore opposes any attempts at resolution that do not involve complete independence for the Sahrawi people (Ould-Mey & Zoubir, 2016). However, despite facing several challenges, Morocco continues to pursue international recognition for its sovereignty over its Sahara. In 2018, Morocco submitted an enhanced autonomy plan which grants more significant self-governance to the Sahrawi population while preserving its sovereignty over the region. This bid was considered a substantial step onward in settling the conflict and got the support of various countries such as France, Spain, and the United States (Middle East Policy Council, 2019). Nevertheless, the international community has shown different reactions to Moroccan initiatives. Some backed the POLISARIO Front and acknowledged SADR as an autonomous nation, while other states endorsed Morocco's claim to its Sahara.

3.1.5 International Responses to Moroccan Efforts

Several African and Arab nations accept Morocco's sovereignty over the Sahara and support its claim. Included in this group are Jordan, Senegal, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. In addition to expressing support for Morocco's stance on the matter, these nations have also inked deals to deepen bilateral economic relations (Boukhars, 2018).

Other European states have also demonstrated their backing for Morocco's position on the Sahara. Among them, France, a close ally of Morocco for a long time, has expressed support for a "practical" resolution to the conflict that respects the country's geographical integrity. While Spain stated its commitment to cooperate with Morocco in finding a solution that protects the interests of both sides (Chelimo, 2012). Countries

that dispute Moroccan claims to its Sahara, however, also exist. In public, the United States has adopted a more circumspect stance toward the dispute and has called for a peaceful resolution through communication between all parties. The European Union has likewise remained impartial on the subject and backs UN-led efforts to put an end to the violence. Algeria is one of the most outspoken opponents of Moroccan control over the Moroccan Sahara, on the other side. Algeria supports the POLISARIO Front's demands for Saharan independence by giving them money and support in the armed forces. Another nation that rejects Moroccan claims on the Moroccan Sahara is South Africa, which supported the POLISARIO Front historically and throughout the apartheid era (Chelimo, 2012).

International organizations such as the United Nations (UN) have also played an important role in addressing the conflict between Morocco and POLISARIO Front in the Moroccan Sahara. In 1991, the UN brokered a ceasefire agreement between the two parties which resulted in the deployment of a peacekeeping mission known as MINURSO (United Nations Mission for Referendum in Western Sahara). MINURSO was tasked with organizing a referendum on self-determination for people living in the Moroccan Sahara but due to disagreements over voter eligibility, the referendum has not been held to date. And the situation remains unsolved, and tensions in the region are persistent (Zoubir & Pazzanita, 1995). There is no other way to a durable agreement other than which can be reached through communication and making concessions between parties of the conflict.

3.1.6 International Reactions to Algerian Involvement in the Conflict

While some justified Algeria's engagement in the conflict as being vital to uphold the Sahrawi people's right to self-determination, many blamed the country for contributing to the continuation of the conflict and escalating regional tensions. One of the primary accusations made against Algeria's role in the Moroccan Sahara crisis is that it gave the POLISARIO Front monetary and military backing, enabling them to carry on the war in the Moroccan Sahara. Training and supplying POLISARIO militants while also giving them diplomatic and political support on a massive level are all aspects of this support (Zoubir & Rizkallah, 2020). Opponents contend that by

enabling both sides to carry on fighting rather than working toward a peaceful solution, this support has simply served to prolong the conflict. In addition, others claim Algeria uses its participation in the Moroccan Sahara conflict to divert attention from home problems and preserve its power in the region. Algeria's intervention in the Moroccan Sahara was also criticized for intensifying hostilities between Morocco and itself. While Algeria considers Morocco's authority over the Moroccan Sahara as a breach of international laws and human rights, Morocco regards Algeria's backing for the POLISARIO Front as a threat to its sovereignty (Boukhars, 2018).

This tension between Morocco and Algeria has spilled over into other areas beyond just the Moroccan Sahara. For example, both countries accused each other of supporting terrorist groups operating within their borders. This ongoing hostility between two major regional powers only serves to destabilize an already volatile region. Finally, some detractors contend that Algeria's involvement in the Moroccan Sahara betrays hypocrisy given its own history of colonization and occupation. While Algerian politicians frequently describe their backing for POLISARIO as being motivated by anti-colonialist and self-determination ideas, some have noted that Algeria has a history of colonialism and occupation (Ariyati, 2020). For more than 130 years before attaining independence in 1962, Algeria, for instance, was a French colony. French colonial authority brutally suppressed and violently treated the Algerian people at this time. In addition, Algeria has been charged with occupying nearby regions after winning independence, including the Moroccan Sahara and portions of Mali (Ariyati, 2020).

3.2 The United Nations in the Moroccan Sahara

3.2.1 The United Nations Peacekeeping

Peacekeeping operations were initiated by the United Nations to provide an alternative option for global security, which the UN had envisioned but was unable to offer. Such operations bring together civilian and military officials from member states under the direct command of the United Nations to facilitate ceasefires and political resolutions among disputing nations and factions within states (Zoubir & pazzanita, 1995).

The success of a peacekeeping mission is reliant on several key factors. These include local approval, which is obtained through the belief in the sponsoring organization's neutrality and moral responsibility. The capacity to refute misconceptions that may arise is also crucial, as is the explicit support of major nations. The absence of any of these factors in a mission's arsenal may lead to failure. Given that an unsuccessful mission may weaken the UN's credibility, which is already limited according to United Nations officials and member states, every effort is made to ensure a mission's success.

Since their inception, peacekeeping operations have undertaken increasingly challenging tasks, ranging from supervising force disengagements and buffer zones to monitoring the withdrawal of militant groups and guaranteeing the conduct of neutral and intimidation-free elections. The United Nations may even temporarily oversee a nation's or territory's government to aid in such efforts. This indicates that the UN has become deeply engaged in resolving and containing conflicts (Chelimo, 2012).

In the UN system, the fifteen members of the Security Council hold command over the Secretary-General, and member nations control the financial and material resources required for field operations. Once the Security Council approves, the Secretary-General has limited authority and cannot object. However, the Secretary-General plays a critical role in implementing the Council's decisions, including the planning and management of peacekeeping missions.

3.2.2 The Moroccan Sahara Conflict Resolution Efforts

The Moroccan Sahara dispute has been a long-standing problem that has drawn the attention of numerous parties wanting to negotiate and find a diplomatic solution. Many entities have tried to play a part in settling the issue throughout the years. These organizations include 14 nations, namely, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), the Organization of African Unity, the Arab League, and the United Nations. The primary military suppliers to Morocco, the United States, and France have also made attempts to boost diplomacy via the use of assistance. Yet, despite these efforts, the problem remains unsolved (Ariyati, 2020).

When it comes to finding a solution to the Moroccan Sahara dispute, three main options have been proposed. The first alternative was the formation of a Saharan organization linked with either Mauritania or Morocco, with differing degrees of Saharan sovereignty. The POLISARIO Front, on the other hand, has always preferred the second option, which calls for direct discussions between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front to negotiate the conditions of a Moroccan withdrawal, the foundation of an independent Sahrawi state, and the nature of their future contacts. Algeria's independence, which included a referendum endorsing the conditions agreed upon with France at Evian, was seen as a worthy precedent by the POLISARIO Front. The third possible solution revolved around the concept of a referendum (Ariyati, 2020). Nevertheless, Morocco originally resisted this plan since the referendum is commonly connected with the concept of an autonomous entity in the Sahara. Rabat ultimately agreed to the referendum idea in 1981, but considerable gaps remained. According to King Hassan II, any OAU-sponsored referendum would be simply confirmatory, providing Morocco with the necessary international legitimacy for the Moroccan Sahara to be officially included in the monarchy. Only conditions that make a POLISARIO victory unsustainable may allow the referendum to take place.

The peace effort faced various hurdles, with the POLISARIO Front wielding diplomatic power and Morocco gaining strength in the area. The UN lacked both the power and the collective inclination to impose a solution on Morocco, making Moroccan cooperation vital if the process was to proceed. The process began slowly, with the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity sponsoring two rounds of informal discussions in New York in April and May 1986 (Zoubir & Pazzanita, 1995). It took another 18 months for a United Nations technical group to be deployed to the region to lay the extra foundation.

Notwithstanding these efforts, repairing Moroccan-Algerian connections was critical for the process to continue. In order to do this, Saudi Arabia functioned as a credible inter-Arab mediator. In the spring of 1987, Saudi Arabia increased its arbitration efforts, culminating in a three-way meeting near the Moroccan-Algerian border. Official diplomatic connections between Algeria and Morocco were reestablished on May 16, 1988, after a 12-year hiatus. This breakthrough prepared the stage for additional discussions, culminating in the creation of a good office mission

by the Organization of African Unity and the United Nations Secretary- General in 1985 (Charrad & Elyazghi, 2020). The expedition created "the settlement ideas," which the POLISARIO Front and Morocco endorsed on August 30, 1988. The complete text of the settlement proposals, as well as the broad structure of the Secretary-strategy General's for implementing them, were included in a report that the Security Council approved in 1990. On April 29, 1991, the Security Council established the "United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara" (MINURSO) in conjunction with the Secretary-General's report which disclosed further specifics on the implementation plan (Sola-Martin, 2010).

Nevertheless, the organization's efforts to carry out the referendum have been hampered by several obstacles, including a lack of consensus on who is entitled to vote, a lack of an agreed- upon voter registration mechanism, and a lack of a clear definition of the territory's sovereignty. As a result, the vote has been indefinitely postponed, leaving the Moroccan Sahara problem unsolved (Zunes & Mundy, 2010).

In recent years, there have been fresh attempts to end the dispute via alternate methods, including dialogue between the parties and the formation of an autonomous Sahrawi state. Morocco has also suggested a proposal for autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty, which the POLISARIO Front has dismissed as inadequate.

Despite these attempts, the conflict continues to simmer, with periodic outburstsof violence and human rights violations (Human Rights Watch, 2018). The international world continues to be concerned about the situation in the Moroccan Sahara, with many urging for a reasonable and sustainable settlement that respects the rights and aspirations of the Sahrawi people.

3.2.3 MINURSO

The MINURSO was launched in 1991 aiming to conduct a referendum in the Moroccan Sahara. The mission was launched to resolve the protracted war between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front, which has been active since 1975.

The decolonization process that took place throughout Africa in the 20th century is at the heart of MINURSO's history and background. Spain left its colony in the Moroccan Sahara in 1975, leaving a power vacuum that was swiftly filled by Morocco and Mauritania. Due to this,

Morocco and the POLISARIO Front engaged in a protracted struggle that ended in a cease-fire mediated by the UN in 1991 (Zoubir & Pazzanita, 1995).

After 10 years of war, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the United Nations Secretary-General collaborated in the launch of a mission of good offices in 1985 that developed "the settlement proposals," which the POLISARIO Front and Morocco approved on the 30th of August 1988. The full body of the settlement proposals and the general framework of the Secretary-General's plan for putting them into effect were included in a report that the Security Council endorsed in 1990. In conjunction with the Secretary-General's report, which revealed additional details on the implementation strategy, the Security Council proceeded to establish the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) on 29th April 1991.

Following the Plan, there would be a transitional stage in which the Special Representative of the Secretary-General would take charge of all aspects relevant to the referendum in which Saharans would pick between autonomy and reintegration with Morocco. An integrated team of United Nations civilians, military, and police officers would support the Special Representative in his responsibilities; and this team would be known as MINURSO. A resettlement program would be administered by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees for Sahrawis residing outside the Region who are entitled to vote. The declaration of the referendum's conclusion was intended to mark the end of the transitional period, which would have started when the ceasefire took effect (Zoubir & Pazzanita, 1995). At full size, the security team would add up to roughly 300 policemen and nearly 1,700 members of the military force. The referendum was scheduled to be held in January 1992, under the settlement plan. Nevertheless, it was unable to adhere to the scheduled date.

Due to MINURSO's inability to set up a vote on self-determination, the efficiency of its mandate has been questioned over time. It has been difficult for the mission to maintain peace and stability in the region, and it has also been accused of allowing

violations of human rights (Zoubir & Pazzanita, 1995). Questions concerning MINURSO's mission and impartiality have been at the forefront of debates surrounding its presence. Others contend that MINURSO has not gone far enough to safeguard human rights or hold violators accountable, while others think its political dealings with Morocco went beyond what was required of it.

Ultimately, MINURSO continues to play a significant role in settling one of Africa's oldest conflicts. Yet, concerns persist regarding its efficacy and objectivity, making it a subject deserving of more investigation and research.

3.2.4 Background and History of MINURSO

Resolution 690 of the UN Security Council was passed in April 1991 creating the MINURSO. The POLISARIO Front, a separatist movement aiming to found an independent state in the Moroccan Sahara, and Morocco were to oversee a truce under the supervision of the mission. Since 1975, when Spain evacuated from the region and the POLISARIO Front and Morocco both asserted rights, there has been a conflict over the Moroccan Sahara.

The initial intention was for Saharan people to vote on whether they desired independence or a merger with Morocco in a referendum. However, disagreements between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front over who should be eligible to vote delayed the process. Furthermore, there were concerns about how such a referendum would be conducted (Chopra, 1994).

Monitoring the ceasefire, planning and supervising a referendum on self-determination, helping with confidence-building measures between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front, and performing other activities linked to upholding peace and security in the area are all part of MINURSO's mandate.

MINURSO has been operating in the Moroccan Sahara for 30 years, but the conflict has not yet been resolved. No long-term solution has been achieved despite several attempts at mediation by various international organizations throughout the years. The fact that both sides have extremely diverse opinions on what should occur next is one of the major difficulties MINURSO is currently facing (Zoubir & Bemabdallah, 2019).

The Sahrawi people would receive autonomy but remain under Moroccan sovereignty, according to Morocco, which claims that its sovereignty over the Sahara is not negotiable. However, the POLISARIO Front is still pressing for the Moroccan Sahara to become a sovereign state and gain independence from Morocco.

Human rights violations done by both parties during their protracted struggle are a worry that goes along with these political difficulties. The Moroccan Sahara's natural resources have reportedly been exploited by international businesses without the Sahrawi people's knowledge or permission (Shelley & Terill, 2015).

MINURSO has continued to play a crucial part in preserving the peace and security in the Moroccan Sahara despite the difficulties it faces. The professionalism and objectivity of MINURSO have also been lauded, as these qualities have promoted trust between the parties. However, significant effort must be expended before a long-term solution can be identified.

3.2.5 Effectiveness of MINURSO's Mission

Since its establishment, there has been discussion on the efficiency of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). The mission was established in 1991 with the aim of arranging a referendum to resolve the future status of the Moroccan Sahara, which has been a point of conflict between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front since the Spanish withdrew from the area in 1975. MINURSO has been present for almost three decades, but no referendum has been held.

Morocco's reluctance to have a referendum is a significant element that impacts MINURSO's effectiveness. Morocco asserts sovereignty over its Sahara, is unwilling to engage in negotiations, and has disallowed the holding of an independence referendum. This strong stance by Morocco led to a stalemate in MINURSO's mission, as it cannot fulfill its mandate without cooperation from both parties (Darbouch & Zoubir, 2008).

Another issue limiting MINURSO's efficacy is a shortage of resources and staff assigned to the operation. The UN Security Council has repeatedly called for increased funding and personnel for MINURSO, but these requests have largely gone unheeded.

This lack of resources limits MINURSO's ability to monitor human rights violations and facilitate negotiations between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front.

Moreover, certain MINURSO members have been accused of favoring one faction over another. This erodes trust in MINURSO's capacity to remain neutral while carrying out its mandate effectively (Zoubir & Pazzanita, 1995).

Notwithstanding these obstacles, MINURSO's presence has resulted in some victories. One notable achievement was the 1991 ceasefire agreement reached under UN auspices between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front. The peace lasted 29 years, despite occasional violations by both sides, before dissolving in late 2020.

Additionally, MINURSO's monitoring activities have aided in the reduction of human rights violations. It also provides humanitarian assistance, such as food distribution programs for war refugees.

Several variables influence the efficiency of the MINURSO mission. While there have been some successes, such as the ceasefire agreement and fewer human rights violations, the lack of movement toward a referendum, as well as the restricted resources available to MINURSO, continue to limit its efficacy. To improve MINURSO's success, both parties must work together more closely and invest more resources and personnel (Ariyati, 2020).

3.2.6 Controversies Surrounding MINURSO's Presence

The efficiency of MINURSO in carrying out its mandate is one of the most contentious issues surrounding its presence. Critics claim that MINURSO failed to achieve its primary goal of organizing a referendum on Sahrawi self-determination. The UN peacekeeping mission in the Moroccan Sahara has been in place since 1991, but little progress has been made in settling the conflict. Many have questioned whether MINURSO's presence is even necessary given the lack of progress (Conti, 2008).

Another point of contention concerning MINURSO's presence is its restricted mandate in terms of human rights monitoring. MINURSO, unlike other UN peacekeeping missions, lacks a human rights monitoring mechanism. This constraint

calls into doubt the UN's ability to adequately monitor and report on human rights violations in the Moroccan Sahara. Some opponents claim that without a robust process for monitoring human rights violations, Morocco or anybody else participating in the conflict has no motivation to take efforts to resolve them (Human Rights Watch, 2018).

Furthermore, there are worries regarding the financial burden of MINURSO's continued existence in the Moroccan Sahara. The UN spends millions of dollars on this mission alone each year, with the majority of the funds going toward wages and operating expenditures rather than genuine peacekeeping actions. Considering these concerns regarding efficacy and cost- effectiveness, it is natural to wonder if it would be more effective for the UN to disengage from the Moroccan Sahara entirely and spend its resources elsewhere (Zunes & Mundy, 2010).

While some perceive MINURSO as an important force for peacekeeping and stability in the Moroccan Sahara, others see it as a divisive presence that has fallen short of its objectives. The various controversies surrounding MINURSO's presence, including questions about its effectiveness, limitations on human rights monitoring, alleged Moroccan influence over its operations, and the cost of maintaining the mission, all raise serious concerns about the UN's continued support for this peacekeeping mission. Finding a solution that is acceptable to all sides will, in the end, need innovative thinking and a willingness to try fresh ways to settle this long-standing problem.

3.2.7 Challenges Faced by the UN in Resolving the Moroccan Sahara Conflict

The lack of collaboration from all sides participating in the war is one of the key issues that the UN faces. Morocco and the POLISARIO Front have both remained steadfast in their beliefs. Finding a solution that pleases both sides has proven to be challenging for the UN due to this lack of collaboration (Zoubir & Pazzanita, 1995).

Another issue the UN faces is the shortage of political drive on the part of certain member states to pursue a settlement to this dispute. This is due to the fact that several states have financial or strategic interests in maintaining current circumstances and are unwilling to endorse any resolution that might risk those interests. The UN finds it

challenging to reach an agreement among its member nations on the most effective means of resolving this problem as a result (Darbouch & Zoubir, 2008).

The problem of natural resources further complicates the resolution of this dispute. The Moroccan Sahara is rich in natural resources such as phosphate and fishing areas, which are coveted by both Morocco and the POLISARIO Front. Because of the tensions created by the use of these resources, neither party can agree on any strategy to solve the issue over these resources.

The lack of confidence between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front is also a major obstacle to settling this dispute. Both sides have accused one other of breaking prior peace treaties, fueling greater mistrust between them. This mistrust makes it harder for them to reach a settlement that is acceptable to both parties.

The presence of foreign entities complicates the resolution of this issue. Several nations have contributed military or financial assistance to Morocco or the POLISARIO Front, hampering UN attempts to find a peaceful settlement. Other players' participation also makes it harder for the UN to retain its impartiality in the peace process (Darbouch & Zoubir, 2008).

3.2.8 Criticisms of the UN's handling of the conflict of the Moroccan Sahara

Despite its efforts to resolve the conflict, the United Nations has been reprimanded because of the way it handled the situation. The UN's lack of enforcement is one of the most common critiques. Although it has passed multiple resolutions advocating for a peaceful settlement to the crisis, it has not sufficiently enforced them (Zoubir & Pazzanita, 1995).

Another complaint voiced at the UN is its inability to ensure Sahrawi's self-determination. The UN acknowledged their right to self-determination via a referendum in 1991, but it was unable to hold one owing to Moroccan resistance. Notwithstanding what international law promised, this failure has left the Sahrawi people without a voice in their destiny (Zoubir & Pazzanita, 1995).

As a result, this section aims to investigate two major concerns about how successfully or badly the United Nations handled disputes facing the Moroccan Sahara throughout its time there.

3.2.9 United Nations' Lack of Enforcement

One of the most serious critiques leveled against the UN's handling of the Moroccan Sahara issue is a lack of enforcement. Since 1991, the United Nations has been active in conflict resolution, but it has failed to execute its resolutions and enforce its judgments (Zoubir & Pazzanita, 1995).

The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) was founded in 1991 to monitor a referendum on self-determination for the Saharan people. Unfortunately, no referendum was held because no agreement could be reached on voter eligibility standards. The UN Security Council has frequently renewed MINURSO's mission, but it has not delegated any enforcement authority to it. As a consequence, MINURSO may only observe and report on events in the Moroccan Sahara without taking any action (Conti, 2008).

One significant complaint voiced against the UN's handling of the Moroccan Sahara issue is the absence of enforcement mechanisms. The incompetence or reluctance of MINURSO or other UN organizations responsible for enforcing decisions made about this dispute continues to stymie progress toward addressing this long-standing problem. It is vital for the leadership to ensure that justice is served so that the region can finally have peace (Zoubir & Pazzanita, 1995).

3.2.10 Failure in Ensuring Self-Determination Referendum

Failure to hold the self-determination referendum in the Sahara is one of the primary critiques leveled against the UN's handling of the crisis there. Notwithstanding several resolutions and peacekeeping deployments. This failure has led to escalating tensions between the parties (Conti, 2008).

The UN's first purpose was to oversee a self-determination referendum. Nevertheless, the following initiatives fell short of this objective. Morocco and the

POLISARIO Front struck a cease-fire deal in 1991, with intentions for an independence vote within a year. This referendum, however, has yet to take place owing to conflicts over voter eligibility and other concerns (Conti, 2008).

In order to establish a right conclusion, the UN must act on two fronts: implementing its resolutions and accords, as well as facilitating a fair self-determination process. Only then can there be hope for a peaceful conclusion that respects all sides' rights.

3.3 Moroccan Split with the OAU

Numerous summits were organized responding to Algeria and Libya's full backing for the POLISARIO Front to become a member of the OAU. It was later approved for admission to the OAU as a freedom movement in January 1976 by the OAU Liberation Committee in Mozambique. However, it failed to gain the support of the majority of the members. As a result, its leaders were expelled from the Port Louis summit. Algeria and Libya were successful in reopening the Sahara dispute during the conference, and they ended the meeting by urging a special meeting to discuss the Moroccan Sahara issue (Charrad & Elyazghi, 2020). The summit's agenda included choosing a date, and location, and contacting the main players, including those in the Moroccan Sahara. 2 years later, upon its 15th summit in Sudan, the Organization of African Unity delayed the special summit discussing the Sahara issue in favor of forming a special committee to conduct a fact-finding quest to look into all aspects of the issue, including the population's right to self-determination in the region.

On top of being suspended due to the unexpected overthrow of the President of Mauritania, Algeria and Morocco raised concerns about a few committee members and pledged to hinder the committee's work because they did not trust it to be unbiased. While Morocco rejected the participation of The Malian president due to his antipathy towards them and the Tanzanian president due to his government's recognition of SADR, Algeria fiercely objected to Sudan's role of supervision of the committee because of its close relations with Morocco. The severe ideological disparities between Morocco, Libya, and Algeria intensified to the extent of affecting the rest of the OAU

members. Within the Organization, 2 ideological factions emerged by 1982 (Charrad & Elyazghi, 2020).

By 1980, the implementation committee had put into effect a resolution that called for the establishment of a cease-fire date by the Committee and its chairman, as well as the supervision of the restriction of forces to their stations by a peace-keeping mission and a military inspection unit that would remain in the Moroccan Sahara territory at Morocco's request and was to be summoned when needed. The task of convening a meeting with the conflicted parties was given to the Kenyan President and OAU Chairman Daniel Arap Moi, however, the POLISARIO Front firmly rejected the proposal, insisting that Algeria had to accept it beforehand in order to be embraced by them. Morocco, on the other hand, supported the plan and agreed to fully assist the OAU Chairperson and the Implementation Committee in this task (Charrad & Elyazghi, 2020). When the OAU Secretary General unilaterally permitted the SADR to participate in the discussions as a member state during the 38th ordinary session of the Council of Ministers in Ethiopia in 1982, 19 members protested this decision and left the meeting in disapproval with the Secretary General's conduct, which lost momentum for the negotiations. To stem the chaos into which the OAU had descended, Arap Moi led a minor summit in Nairobi in 1983, where 12 participants gathered in an attempt to solve the stalemate, but it was fruitless. A summit conference of the OAU was unable to be held because of internal divisions (Charrad & Elyazghi, 2020). The stalemate continued with no major events until the 1984 summit in Ethiopia when the SADR representatives were granted a seat in the summit Hall. The Moroccan delegation then immediately left the hall. Afterward, the Moroccan King's advisor conveyed a statement from the monarch, asserting that the SADR's participation was unacceptable, leaving Morocco with no other option than to withdraw its membership with the OAU. Since then, every summit has intentionally avoided discussing the Moroccan Sahara conflict, which has plagued the organization for more than ten years. While, Morocco devoted itself to Euro- Mediterranean incorporation and participation in both the Arab League and the UN, where the admittance of the SADR was unattainable as long as it failed to satisfy the criteria to be a fully sovereign and autonomous body with real authority over its region and citizenry. The OAU began to collapse due to an absence of efficient leadership and unity among its members (Charrad & Elyazghi, 2020).

3.4 Ceasefire

The Moroccan Sahara cease-fire agreement is among the biggest diplomatic successes in recent history (Conti, 2008). After Spain ended its colonial administration over the Moroccan Sahara territory in 1975, Morocco annexed it, sparking the start of the Moroccan Sahara war and causing Morocco and the separatist POLISARIO Front to engage in a protracted conflict.

Many international organizations, notably the United Nations, which has been actively engaged in peace talks since 1991, have worked to achieve a durable peace (Sola-Martin, 2010).

The Secretary-General suggested on the 24th of May 1991, that the ceasefire would be implemented on the 6th of September. The date was agreed upon by both sides. Nevertheless, throughout the span of the next three months, it became evident that many operations that needed to be performed before the ceasefire, would not be feasible to complete by September 6th. It also became apparent that there were still significant areas of disagreement between the parties, despite their prior approval of the settlement proposal. Hence, one side refused to accept the initiation of the period of transition on the 6th of September 1991. Simultaneously, fighting erupted in the Region, shattering an informal truce that had existed for more than 2 years (Zoubir & Pazzanita, 1995). Given these developments, the Secretary-General concluded that the official cease-fire has to be implemented on the 6th of September, as originally agreed, with the premise that the transition process shall start once the pending tasks were accomplished. The Security Council agreed with the suggestion that one hundred military monitors shall be stationed in the Region to ensure a ceasefire and the end of fighting in certain districts. As a result, the number of military monitors was doubled to 228 and even some logistical and administrative personnel were deployed to the region. MINURSO's principal role during that period was limited to ensuring the implementation of the ceasefire (Conti, 2008). The operation's head office was placed in Laayoune, with provincial offices in the region's northern and southern sectors. The POLISARIO camp Tindouf also had a liaison office placed to maintain communication with the Front and Algeria.

The Western Saharan separatist movement has been significantly impacted by the truce. While it has improved the region's relative stability, it has also put those aiming

for independence in a bind. The UN-mediated accord required a vote on self-determination for the Saharan people, but this poll has not happened because of conflicts about who should be allowed to vote (Zunes & Mundy, 2010).

There is still optimism that the Moroccan Sahara might experience enduring peace despite continued difficulties and failures. This section will examine initiatives for enduring peace and how they affect the independence movement in this contentious region.

3.4.1 Impact on Western Saharan Independence Movement

The 1991 ceasefire deal had a profound effect on the Western Saharan independence movement. The fight between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front, which represents the Sahrawi people's demand for self-determination, had lasted for more than a decade until the United Nations intervened to mediate a truce. The main dispute over the Moroccan Sahara's existence as a territory was not resolved by the ceasefire, but it did stop hostilities between the two sides (Zoubir & Pazzanita, 1995).

The "Moroccan Wall" or "Berm," which divides Moroccan-controlled territory from POLISARIO-controlled territory, was established as a result of the truce. The POLISARIO Front has found it challenging to wage armed opposition against Morocco as a result of this wall since they are unable to enter Moroccan-controlled territory without running the danger of military conflict. Some participants in the independence movement have reacted to this by advocating for peaceful solutions to problems (Conti, 2008).

Nevertheless, there has not been much movement since 1991 in determining the Moroccan Sahara's position as a territory. Due to conflicts over who should be permitted to vote, the UN mission in the Moroccan Sahara (MINURSO) was formed to supervise a referendum on self-determination but has not yet been put into action. As a result, separatist Sahrawis believe that their right to self-determination is being denied, and they have lost faith in both Moroccan and international attempts to resolve the dispute.

Overall, the truce has ended direct fighting between Moroccan and POLISARIO Front soldiers, but it has not addressed deeper problems with the Moroccan Sahara's

position as a region. As a result, it continues to hinder the independence movement's capacity to accomplish its objectives and causes a lot of Sahrawis to get disillusioned with their lack of independence- related advancement (Zoubir & Pazzanita, 1995).

The Moroccan Sahara truce has been a key milestone in Morocco's continuing battle with the POLISARIO Front. The truce has temporarily halted hostilities and offered a chance for long-term peace initiatives. The UN has had a major part in mediating discussions between the two sides. Ensuring that multiple rounds of talks are taking place in attempts to find a mutually acceptable settlement to the dispute.

Yet, despite these attempts, attaining sustainable peace in the Moroccan Sahara, it remains a huge problem. The subject of self-determination remains unsolved, with both parties maintaining solid viewpoints. Moreover, there are worries about human rights violations in the area, such as limits on free speech and assembly (Zoubir & Pazzanita, 1995).

The ceasefire's influence on the independence movements in the Moroccan Sahara is equally complicated. Although it has reduced bloodshed and allowed for increased political involvement, it has also caused splits within the movement about whether to accept a compromise solution that falls short of ultimate independence.

However, even though the Moroccan Sahara ceasefire agreement is an important milestone toward ending this conflict, much more work still has to be done before a sustainable peace can be realized.

3.5 Efforts for Lasting Peace

Many parties have been engaged in the efforts to resolve the Moroccan Sahara conflict for many years. The POLISARIO Front, which represents the interests of the Sahrawi people, and Morocco have been able to negotiate thanks in large part to the United Nations. A cease-fire agreement was reached in 1991 between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front but it had no lasting impact on the fighting (Conti, 2008).

Ever since the UN has continued to oversee several rounds of discussions aiming to reach a long-term peace agreement. The most recent round of negotiations was in December 2018 when both parties decided to pick up where they left off with regard

to identifying confidence-boosting measures and a political solution based on concessions (2020).

Permanent peace in the Moroccan Sahara has also been a goal of other international organizations, such as the African Union. The African Union has advocated for a vote on independence or a merger with Morocco because it understands that self-determination is crucial for settling problems.

Although major attempts have been made to bring about a durable peace in the Moroccan Sahara, progress has generally been gradual as a result of conflicts over crucial issues like sovereignty and self-determination. Nevertheless, the continuance of diplomatic efforts by international institutions provides hope that a fair and peaceful solution will finally be found (UN, 2020).

3.6 Moroccan Autonomy Plan

Since 2004, the Security Council has been actively invested in calling all parties to cooperate with the UN to end the stalemate and work on finding a realistic and lasting political solution. Responding to this appeal, the Kingdom of Morocco launched a good, constructive, and dynamic process and promised to present an autonomy plan for its Sahara while maintaining its sovereignty and sense of national unity. Aiming to contribute to the efforts made toward creating a contemporary democratic society founded on the rule of law, respect of individual freedom, economic and social advancement (Middle East Policy Council, 2019).

The Moroccan Autonomy Plan is a political effort aimed at settling the long-running conflict over the Moroccan Sahara's status. The proposal was initially proposed in 2007 and has since the source of significant debates and studies. This dissertation will examine the details of the Moroccan Autonomy Plan, with a focus on its political implications and regional impact.

The political implications of the Moroccan Autonomy Plan are multifaceted. On one hand, it presents a significant change in Moroccan policy toward this conflict. Morocco has always affirmed that the Moroccan Sahara is an inseparable part of its territory, thus rejected any attempt for independence. The autonomy plan, however, offers a compromise solution that would grant the region a degree of self-rule while

maintaining Morocco's sovereignty over the territory (Middle East Policy Council, 2019).

In terms of regional impact, the autonomy plan has potential implications for both North Africa and Europe. The resolution of the Moroccan Sahara conflict could positively affect regional stability by easing tensions between neighboring countries and developing chances for economic collaboration. The settlement of the Moroccan Sahara dispute might benefit regional stability by decreasing tensions between surrounding nations and opening up new prospects for economic collaboration (Zniber & El-Katiri, 2017, p. 359-367). However, there are some uncertainties about what kind of response would other countries have to this proposal. Especially Algeria having spent significant amounts of time, money, and effort in attempts to undermine Moroccan sovereignty over its southern areas via backing the POLISARIO Front. Overall, examining these different aspects of the Moroccan Autonomy Plan will provide valuable insights into this conflict's resolution efforts.

3.6.1 Political Implications

The Moroccan Autonomy Plan has significant political implications for not only Morocco but also the wider region of North Africa. The plan was considered to be a realistic, pragmatic, lasting, and accommodating political solution to the long-standing dispute. The autonomy plan offers a compromise that allows some degree of self-governance for the Sahrawi people while maintaining Moroccan sovereignty over the territory. However, the plan's success depends on its acceptance by all parties involved, including Algeria and the POLISARIO Front (Ariyati, 2020). Furthermore, the autonomy plan has implications for global politics as well. It challenges traditional notions of state sovereignty and territorial integrity by proposing a unique model of governance that combines elements of decentralization and autonomy within an existing state framework. This approach could serve as a potential blueprint for resolving other conflicts around the world where minority groups seek greater political representation and autonomy.

Additionally, implementation of the autonomy plan would strengthen Morocco's position in regional politics by removing one of its major sources of conflict with

Algeria. It would also potentially increase economic development within the Moroccan Sahara through an increase in investments and development projects. Overall, while there are both benefits and some risks of non-approval associated with implementing the Moroccan Autonomy Plan, it still represents an innovative solution to a longstanding conflict that could have positive implications for regional stability and global politics if successfully implemented (Ariyati, 2020).

3.6.2 Regional Impact

The Moroccan Autonomy Plan has not only gained traction within the country, but it has also made a significant impact on the regional level. The plan presents a unique opportunity to resolve the longstanding conflict in the Moroccan Sahara, promoting stability in North Africa. The autonomy proposal got praise from many countries in the region (Ariyati, 2020).

Furthermore, the plan got backing from many European countries, including France and Spain. The United States and the United Nations also described it as a serious and credible path to end the conflict and finally achieve lasting peace in the region (UN, 2020). The proposed autonomy for the Moroccan Sahara would allow for greater economic development and investment opportunities that could benefit not only Morocco but also its neighboring countries.

The regional influence of this plan is enormous. As it could feature increased cooperation between North African nations and pave the way for greater integration in the Maghreb region.

This would result in improved trade relations, better security coordination, and enhanced political stability (El-Katiri & Fattouh, 2017).

However, concerns about how other regional powers like Algeria may react to this proposal remain. Some experts argue that Algeria views itself as key player in this dispute and may resist any attempt by Morocco to claim sovereignty over the Moroccan Sahara (Ould-Mey & Zoubir, 2016).

Despite all challenges, Morocco kept its determination to find a peaceful resolution via talks and negotiations with the parties involved. The positive regional response

towards this initiative is an indication of its potential success and highlights how important it is for all stakeholders to work together towards achieving lasting peace in North Africa. Overall, the Moroccan Autonomy Plan is a promising development in resolving one of Africa's longest-standing conflicts. It offers hope for a peaceful resolution that benefits all parties involved, as well as a template to guide resolution efforts for other conflicts of similar nature in different parts of the world (UN, 2020).

3.7 Breakdown of Ceasefire

Following the intrusion of POLISARIO militia of the Guerguerat buffer zone on October 21, 2020, and although supporting the Secretary General's actions, the Moroccan Sovereign stated in a letter to Mr. Guterres: The status quo can no longer be maintained. If this situation persists, the Kingdom of Morocco reserves the right, in accordance with its responsibilities and in full compliance with international law, to act at any time and in any manner necessary to preserve the status of the zone, restore freedom of movement, and preserve Moroccan dignity (Morocco in Australia, 2020). As a result, in response to the POLISARIO's provocations at the Guerguerat border crossing, which aimed to disrupt civilian and commercial transport along the border between Morocco and Mauritania, Moroccan Royal Forces intervened at the El Guerguerat crossing to restore free movement peacefully, without clashes or threats to civilian safety. The operation was launched after the POLISARIO militias consistently broke military agreements and rejected UN requests to vacate the region, and after the United Nations had exhausted all diplomatic options. The Royal Armed Forces operation seeks specifically to enforce the ceasefire by avoiding the repetition of such significant and unacceptable activities that breach the military agreement (Morocco in Australia, 2020).

However, the leader of the POLISARIO Front declared its unilateral decision to end the ceasefire and resume armed conflict. Briefly afterwards, it came as no surprise that Algeria announced unilaterally on August 24th the severance of diplomatic relations with Morocco, after months of heightened tensions and days after the Algerian presidency announced in a statement their relations with Morocco would be reviewed. In response, Morocco expressed its regrets following this completely unjustified but expected decision as well as its impact on the Algerian people. For its

part, the Kingdom of Morocco asserted that it will remain a credible and loyal partner for the Algerian people and will continue to act, with wisdom and responsibility, for the development of healthy and fruitful inter-Maghreb relations (Morocco in Australia, 2021).

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

The UN's passive involvement in this conflict made its performance debatable to say the least. Even though the challenges it faced are not to be belittled, taking everything into consideration, one can notice and point out several things that simply should have been done or done better to further advance towards negotiating a permanent peace deal. Instead, it is arguably apparent that the United Nations have lacked discipline, dedication, consistency, and most importantly innovation in its mission. It mainly relied on endorsing solutions that have been proposed by other entities instead of actively seeking a proposal of its own and working on developing it thus making a measurable addition to the negotiation table. Eventually the conflict had gotten to a stalemate which the UN has a part in creating. This increased the instability of the region and endangered the existing ceasefire at the time, leading to its eventual breakdown and the return of hostilities.

Due to this recurring failure to solve the conflict, the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) was deemed to fail. Thus, depriving the region of great benefits that could have lifted both the AMU as a whole and its members individually to high levels economically, militarily, and politically (Bensassi & Ben Hamida, 2019. p. 1-16).

4.1 The Conflict as an Enemy to the Political Strength of the Arab Maghreb Union

This conflict has many implications on the political scene in North Africa, with the most significant one arguably being the tension between regional unity and national sovereignty. While some members of the AMU support Morocco's claim over Moroccan Sahara to maintain regional stability and unity, others argue that each country must have its sovereign rights (Zoubir & Benabdallah, 2018. p. 317-335). This tension has led to a lack of cooperation between AMU member states in resolving the issue.

Resource management and distribution is another critical implication of this conflict. The Moroccan Sahara is rich in natural resources such as phosphate deposits and fishing grounds. Therefore, control over these resources has become an essential factor in the conflict. Some countries have accused Morocco of exploiting these resources without sharing them fairly with other AMU member states (Bensassi & Ben Hamida, 2019. p. 1-16).

Overall, understanding the implications of the Moroccan Sahara Conflict on regional politics is crucial for ensuring peace and stability in North Africa. It requires a careful balance between protecting national sovereignty and promoting regional cooperation for resource management and distribution.

4.2 Regional Integration Vs National Sovereignty

The Moroccan Sahara conflict has been a debate that has challenged the political power of the Arab Maghreb Union. There's a growing belief among some members of the Arab Maghreb Union that regional integration is the key to achieve economic development and political stability. There is an argument that by working together, countries in the Arab Maghreb Union can share their resources and expertise to overcome mutual challenges such as terrorism, migration, and climate change (Boukhars & Karlberg, 2019). While others believe that the national sovereignty of the respective countries has to be maintained at all costs. This perspective maintains that each country in the union should have total control over its affairs without interference from other members or external actors. Fearing that regional integration may lead to a loss of autonomy for some countries, which could eventually weaken their political influence and capacity to protect their citizens. A compromise could be reached through more cooperation on specific issues while maintaining the sovereignty of each member to a high degree (Zoubir & Benabdallah, 2018. p. 317-335). For example, members could work together to enhance trade between them while preserving control over their respective borders and immigration policies. Nevertheless, it is impossible to achieve regional integration without sacrificing some degree of national sovereignty. In that regard, even powerful states such as France and Germany had to make compromises to create the European Union.

4.3 Resource Management and Distribution

The Moroccan Sahara Conflict has far-reaching implications for the political power of the Arab Maghreb Union, particularly in terms of resource management and distribution. The Moroccan Sahara is rich in natural resources like phosphates, fishing waters, and potentially oil and gas. However, the control and exploitation of these resources have been a major source of contention between Morocco and the POLISARIO Front. The Arab Maghreb Union was established to promote economic integration among North African countries by sharing resources and promoting trade (Zniber & El-Katiri, 2017). However, the conflict over Moroccan Sahara has hindered this goal. Morocco's claim to its Saharan territory allowed it to benefit from the natural resources without having to share them with other countries. This caused tensions within the Arab Maghreb Union as other member states, namely Algeria feel that they are being denied their share of resources. Algeria, which supports the POLISARIO's claim to the Moroccan Sahara, accused Morocco of violating international law by exploiting resources in the territory (Bensassi & Ben Hamida, 2019. p. 1-16). The Moroccan Sahara territory is also strategically vital for energy security in North Africa. It has one of Africa's largest aquifers and could supply water to extensive parts of the region. However, access to this water source is currently restricted due to ongoing conflict.

Resource management and distribution are crucial issues for any regional organization seeking economic integration. The Arab Maghreb Union cannot achieve its goals if member states are unable to agree on how they should share their resources fairly. The Moroccan Sahara Conflict has highlighted these challenges and made it clear that resolving territorial disputes is essential for promoting economic cooperation among North African countries. Resource management and distribution are key factors that have a significant impact on the political power dynamics within the Arab Maghreb Union (Boukhars & Karlberg, 2019. p. 771-787). The Moroccan Sahara Conflict serves as a reminder that unresolved territorial disputes can impede efforts toward regional integration and cooperation.

4.4 The Conflict as an Enemy to the Military Strength of the Arab Maghreb Union

One of the main implications of this conflict on the military power of the AMU is that it has hindered cooperation among its member states. The AMU has 5 member states: Namely, Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia. However, Algeria and Morocco have been at odds over the Moroccan Sahara issue for years. Algeria supports the POLISARIO Front and recognizes the self-proclaimed "SADR" as a sovereign state. While Morocco considers the Moroccan Sahara as an integral part of its territory (Zoubir & Benabdallah, 2018. p. 317-335).

This disagreement between Algeria and Morocco has created divisions within the AMU and hindered cooperation among its member states. For instance, there have been disagreements over joint military exercises and arms purchases. This lack of cooperation weakened the military strength of member states both individually and the union as a whole.

Another implication is that this conflict has led to increased militarization in North Africa. Both Morocco and Algeria have invested heavily in their militaries due to concerns about each other's intentions regarding Moroccan Sahara. This arms race increased tensions between the two countries (Zoubir & Rizkallah, 2020).

The POLISARIO Front received support from various countries, including Algeria, which has provided them with weapons and military training. This support has enabled the POLISARIO Front to continue its fight against Morocco for many years.

The conflict also created a power vacuum in the Moroccan Sahara, which has been exploited by multiple non-state actors. For example, there have been many reports of drug trafficking and other criminal exercises in the area. These exercises have further destabilized the region and slowed measures to settle the dispute (Shelley & Murphy, 2015).

4.5 Repercussions of the Power Vacuum Caused by the Conflict

The ongoing dispute over sovereignty has created a power vacuum in the Moroccan Sahara. This power vacuum has allowed various illegal activities to thrive in the region (Shelley & Terrill, 2015). One of these activities is drug trafficking. The Moroccan Sahara connects drug smuggling operations from Latin America into Europe due to its proximity to the main drug trafficking routes (Shelley & Terrill, 2015). Furthermore, human trafficking has also become a significant issue in the Moroccan Sahara due to this power vacuum. Migrants from sub-Saharan Africa constantly pass through this region on their journey to Europe, expecting more promising economic opportunities or seeking asylum from political instability or violence in their home countries. However, they are vulnerable to exploitation by human traffickers who use their desperate situations to benefit financially (Shelley & Murphy, 2015). In addition to these illegal activities, terrorism also poses a threat in the Moroccan Sahara due to its unstable nature caused by this conflict. Extremist groups can exploit this situation by establishing bases or recruiting individuals who are disillusioned or marginalized. The power vacuum created by the unresolved dispute over the Moroccan Sahara provides a fertile ground for such activities to take root (Boukhars & Karlberg, 2018).

4.6 The Conflict as an Enemy to the Economic Excellence of the Arab Maghreb Union

The dispute has resulted in political instability and economic stagnation in the region, with dire consequences for regional economic integration. The effect of this conflict on trade is one of its most important effects on regional economic integration (Bensassi & Ben Hamida, 2019. p. 1-16). The AMU was created with the goal of promoting free trade and collaboration among its members. However, it has been difficult to accomplish this goal because of hostilities between Morocco and Algeria regarding the Moroccan Sahara. The ongoing conflict has led to closed borders between Morocco and Algeria since 1994 and disrupted trade flow within the region.

4.6.1 Impact on Regional Economic Integration

The Moroccan Sahara conflict has had a significant impact on regional economic integration in the Arab Maghreb Union. Political tensions between the member nations as a result of the conflict make it challenging for them to collaborate and pursue shared

economic objectives. This lack of cooperation has led to lost opportunities for economic development and progress, which could have been very advantageous for the area (Boukhars & Karlberg, 2019. p. 771-787). Trade is one of the key ways that the conflict has hampered regional economic integration. The Arab Maghreb Union was established with the intention of fostering free trade between its member nations, however this objective has been hampered by the ongoing Moroccan Sahara conflict.

Morocco's control over the territory and its refusal to allow an independent state to be established there has led to boycotts and sanctions from Algeria. Thus, disrupting trade flows between the two countries, causing economic losses for all parties involved. Furthermore, the conflict also affected investment in the region. Investors are usually reluctant to place their capital into regions that are unstable or where there is a risk of violence. The Moroccan Sahara conflict creates this type of environment, making it difficult for businesses to invest in projects that could benefit the entire region. This lack of investment can lead to stagnation in economic development (Boukhars & Karlberg, 2019. p. 771-787).

In addition to that, political tensions resulting from the conflict have also hindered cooperation on infrastructure projects within the Arab Maghreb Union. Infrastructure is vital for economic development as it lets goods and individuals move easier between countries, lowering expenses and improving efficiency (Zoubir & Benabdallah, 2018. p. 317-335). However, disagreements between member states over how resources should be allocated have stalled many infrastructure projects such as highways or railways that would benefit all members equally.

Finally, another way in which the Moroccan Sahara conflict impacts regional economic integration is through tourism. Tourism is an important source of revenue for many countries within the Arab Maghreb Union but again due to political tensions resulting from this longstanding dispute, tourists are hesitant to travel to the region. This lack of tourism has affected the economies of many countries that rely on this industry for employment and revenue (Zoubir & Benabdallah, 2018. p. 317-335).

The Moroccan Sahara conflict is a major obstacle to regional economic integration in the Arab Maghreb Union. The political tensions created by this dispute have hindered trade, investment, infrastructure projects, and tourism. The overlooked opportunities for economic development and evolution have had substantial

consequences on the region as a whole, making it challenging for member states to compete globally and reach economic superiority (El-Katiri & Fattouh, 2017). The effect on regional economic integration is obvious in the lower levels of intra-regional commerce and investment in comparison to other regions with parallel characteristics. The conceivable advantages of closer economic relations are many, including boosted competitiveness, job creation, technology transfer, and poverty decline. Nevertheless, these benefits cannot be thoroughly realized without settling the underlying political issues that kept the region divided for decades (Zniber & El-Katiri, 2017, p. 359-367).

CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS

This research pointed out the UN shortcomings that need work on, and could be improved and possibly bring a good addition to the United Nations' arsenal in this conflict. The UN should return to the example of the round table talks that took place in Poland in 1989. The United Nations as facilitators, should bring representatives of the main participating entities in this conflict to the table and initiate direct talks between them. It is also suggested that the UN should double their efforts to satisfy Morocco's request that Algeria should also be present in the round table talks, as this request is not about serving Morocco's interests. Rather it is about expediting the resolution process. Another recommendation which I would like to make is to repair the full body of the United Nations organization. The foundation of the current body is made favorable to certain known countries. Having this structure does not serve the purpose of the United Nations when it was founded, instead it allows more power to the already accomplished countries, and with a single vote they can hamper a legitimate, serious and promising solution to a given problem if it contradicts with their interests; which is what happened on several occasions.

The UN should also promote cultural norms by encouraging the appreciation of diversity. Each culture possesses distinct values, traditions, and beliefs that warrant respect. By emphasizing the significance of honoring these differences, the UN can establish an environment where conflicting parties can engage in constructive dialogue without feeling threatened or marginalized. This approach could foster mutual understanding and empathy among different cultures and help bridge the gap between them. Furthermore, the United Nations should promote compromise as a fundamental cultural norm for effective conflict resolution. They should emphasize the importance of all parties involved in a conflict making concessions to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. By highlighting the numerous benefits of compromise over confrontation or domination, they can effectively encourage conflicting parties to seek common ground based on shared interests rather than solely fixating on their differences.

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